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SUBJECT: DRL-FUNDED HUMAN RIGHTS WORKSHOP A SUCCESS

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1B. 04 AMMAN 4061

Summary

1. Embassy Amman successfully implemented human rights training for GOJ officials on February 26-27 sponsored by DRL's Human Rights and Democracy Fund (HRDF). Working with the Jordanian Foreign Ministry and its Institute for Diplomacy, post held a two-day workshop with 30 participants from 13 different Jordanian ministries and organizations. There were lively discussions about international human rights standards and their place in the Arab and Muslim worlds. The event received positive press coverage. End Summary.

Grant Implementation

2. An HRDF grant of USD 21,000 for Jordan was intended to build on the FY 2004 success of working with local human rights organizations and providing human rights training to a spectrum of concerned Jordanian ministries. For logistical reasons the grant was split into two grant agreements. The first grant agreement for USD 6,747 was issued to the International Human Rights Law Institute (IHRLI) to provide human rights experts for the February 26-27 training. The second grant agreement for USD 13,242 was issued to the National Center for Human Rights (NCHR) to conduct an advocacy training and capacity building seminar for Jordanian human rights NGOs, currently scheduled for April 25-28.

3. The human rights training for GOJ officials was held at the Jordanian Institute for Diplomacy and coordinated by the Human Rights Directorate at the Foreign Ministry. The 30 participants came from 13 different Jordanian government agencies and organizations, including the Foreign, Interior, Justice, Social Development, Education, Health, and Labor Ministries. The Family Protection Unit of the Public Security Department, the Jordanian Army, the Directorate of General Intelligence, the Institute for Diplomacy, the Court of Cassation, and the National Center for Human Rights also sent representatives to the training. The participants' familiarity with human rights issues varied greatly, but most brought with them a good grounding in the subject; many had studied the issues at the graduate level. Guest speakers for the training were provided by IHRLI and included their Executive Director, Dr. David Guinn, and two Egyptian human rights experts, Judge Khaled Ahmed and Judge Nehad El-Gamal.

Lively Debate

5. Lively discussions characterized the workshop as participants representing a wide spectrum of viewpoints attempted to reconcile international human rights standards with what they felt was appropriate for Jordan as a predominantly Muslim-Arab country. Many sensitive topics were discussed, including the treatment of women, sharia law, and torture. Some participants were quite conservative in their views while others advanced liberal ideas about human rights. One participant, for example, thought that sharia law should be fully implemented without exemption. Other attendees tried to persuade him that even the most devout Muslim leaders of the past would have "adjusted" the punishments of sharia law were they to live in today's world. Two of the most active proponents of a liberal approach came from the Jordanian Army and the General Intelligence Directorate.

Feedback

6. Participant evaluation forms indicated a strong interest in continued training and a desire to maintain dialogue among those who handle human rights issues at the various ministries. To help facilitate communication we provided all participants with a master list of names, telephone numbers and e-mails. Some participants asked for more Jordan-specific

focus in future workshops and to include Jordanian human rights experts as facilitators. Several felt that the training was too condensed and needed to be held over a longer period of time. Other suggestions included quarterly workshops on different aspects of human rights as they pertain to Jordan and brainstorming sessions on how the Arab world can effectively implement obligations under human rights law.

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